Academic Tenacity: Non-cognitive Factors that Facilitate Student Success.

Presented by

David R. Reetz, Ph.D.
Director of Counseling Services

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I can’t do this.
Inaugural Opening of the National Council on Measurement in Education  –  April 14th, 2012

John Q. Easton
Director of Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

“. . .I hypothesize that the effective teachers. . . are indeed boosting their students’ achievement, buy they are also boosting other important skills, traits, or attributes that aren’t measured. . . I am betting that they could be psychological constructs like grit, perseverance, self-control, engagement, emotional intelligence, social emotional learning, or sense of mastery, concepts that I haven’t mentioned today. These are things that I believe are highly valuable and that both we in the measurement and research community and our partners in schools and districts should be more mindful of. The test score accountability movement has pushed aside many of these so-called ‘non-cognitive’ or ‘soft’ skills and they belong back on the front burner.”
Outline

• What are non-cognitive factors?

• How are non-cognitive factors measured?

• What is the empirical support?

• How to shape learning environments to promote these factors?
Psychology in the Classroom

- Stereo-Type Threat
- Identity-Based Motivation
- Mindset
- Grit/Perseverance/Tenacity
Is intelligence set in stone? Is it a fixed trait?

Is personality set in stone?

Is morality set in stone?

Is talent set in stone?
Mindset

Suggests that you either have ability 
OR 
you have to expand effort.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fixed Mindset</strong></th>
<th><strong>Growth Mindset</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of “smart” – Make no mistakes; Finish tasks quickly; Find tasks easy.</td>
<td>Definition of “smart” – When I figure something out; harder the better.</td>
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<td>Potential is innate; “you’re a natural”; You are.</td>
<td>Potential is developed over time; You become.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have to be.</td>
<td>Luxury of becoming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being smart defined as special, different from others, or better than others.</td>
<td>Being smart defined as improving individually and is no different than others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel urgency to succeed.</td>
<td>Success is cultivated.</td>
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<td>Failure is intolerable and provides no future direction.</td>
<td>Failure hurts but isn’t defining.</td>
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</table>
Empirical Support for Mindset

Several hundred adolescents given ten fairly easy items from non-verbal IQ test.

- Group 1: praised with *Wow, you got 8 right. That’s a really good score. You must be smart at this.*

- Group 2: praised with *Wow, you got 8 right. That’s a really good score. You must have worked really hard.*

Empirical Support for Mindset

➢ Group 1: *You must be smart at this.*

✔ When given more difficult items, these individuals didn’t feel smart anymore and actually felt deficient.

✔ Selected easy task afterward and rejected opportunity for even more challenging items.

✔ Performance continued to diminish, even for easier items.

➢ Group 2: *You must have worked really hard.*

✔ Enjoyed the challenge of the difficult items and focused on learning the solution.

✔ Selected challenging new items in the next task.

✔ Performance continued to improve.

Empirical Support for Mindset

• College students, after doing poorly on a test, were given the chance to look at tests of other students. Those in the growth mindset looked at the tests of people who had done better than they had to correct their deficiency. Students in the fixed mindset chose to look at the tests of people who had done really poorly. (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008)

• When challenged with difficult material, students with growth mindset explored alternative learning strategies, those with a fixed mindset continued to re-read material and eventually stopped trying as materially was deemed too difficult. (Grant & Dweck, 2003)
I can't do this.

How might a Fixed versus Growth Mindset appear in your course(s)?
**Grit/Perseverance/Tenacity**

*Grit* – Perseverance and passion for long-term goals that entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over time despite adversity, and plateaus in progress.

Duckworth, et al. (2007)
I can't do this.

Grit/Perseverance/Tenacity

The Grit Scale
Empirical Support for Grit

The West Point Study

Whole Candidate Score (index of talent)
    SAT
    Class rank
    Demonstrated leadership
    Physical aptitude

The Grit Scale
    Best predicted drop out

Empirical Support for Grit

The National Spelling Bee Study

- The Grit Scale best predicted advancement to later rounds and strongly correlated with hours spent in controlled effortful practice.

Let's talk about grit in the classroom

- What skills related to grit are needed in your course?
- What student behaviors and performances reveal evidence of these skills?
Additional Trends

• OneGoal (College Graduation. Period.)
  – Jeff Nelson, CEO
  – Began in 2007
  – Brings together students from low-income communities in South Side Chicago
  – Curriculum: ACT Prep; College admission process, non-cognitive skill development
  – To date, 87 percent of OneGoal's high school graduates have enrolled in college. Of those who enroll, 85 percent are persisting in college or have graduated with a college degree.

www.onegoalgraduation.org
Next Steps

• It is the responsibility of the learning community to explore how to design a learning environment that promotes these factors.

• Mindful attention to non-cognitive approaches to learning
  – Grit and Mindset
  – Effortful Control
  – Strategies and Tactics
Conclusions

- Involvement and support by all educational stakeholders.

- Utilize research-based best practices.

- Educate Stakeholders on Non-cognitive Factors.

- Unify Themes and definitions.

- Connect non-cognitive factors to discipline-specific context.
References


